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PROGRAM

I. Symphony in C (1813-1883) - Richard Wagner
   (43'/1)
   I. Sostenuto e maestoso - Allegro con brio
   II. Andante ma non troppo, un poco maestoso
   III. Allegro assai
   IV. Allegro molto e vivace

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We are grateful to Jim Turner at Prosser Piano & Organ, Co.,
(N. 185th & Aurora Ave. N.) for the use of the Rodgers electronic organ.
Richard Wagner, renowned to the music lover mainly for his operas and music dramas, started his composing career with instrumental works. As many other composers, Wagner developed his musical individuality over a long period of imitating his predecessors, mainly Beethoven, by whom he was profoundly influenced. As part of his training, he would make careful handwritten copies of the full scores of Beethoven’s Fifth and Ninth Symphonies, and many of his first instrumental works are shaped by those models. He studied equally Mozart’s and Haydn’s Symphonies, making arrangements for piano or copying them for his own study.

The manuscript of the SYMPHONY IN C, written in 1832 while studying at the Leipzig University under the guidance of Christian Theodor Weinfur, Kantor at the Thomaskirche, was one of his composition exercises bearing Weinfur’s corrections. The first performance took place in November 1832 in the Music Conservatory in Prague, under the direction of Dionys Weiser, followed by another one on 15 December 1832 in the Euterpe in Leipzig and yet again on 10 January 1833 at the Gewandhaus. After another performance in Würzburg on 27 August 1833 under the composer’s direction, the piece lay dormant for nearly fifty years.

Wagner’s thorough knowledge of counterpoint, his sense of orchestral balance, the use of a flowing melody and countermelody in the second movement, interesting modulations and imaginative orchestration give us a glimpse into the future development of this great composer.

The performance under Wagner’s own direction on 25 December 1882 in the Teatro La Fenice in Venice, Italy, for a family celebration, only seven weeks before his death, was the last work he conducted.

In 1887, ten years after succeeding Saint-Saëns as choirmaster and assistant organist at the Church of La Madeleine in Paris, Gabriel Fauré began his work on the REQUIEM. Although his father’s death in 1885, followed by his mother’s in 1887, might have been legitimate reasons for writing such a work, Fauré confessed in a letter to Maurice Emmanuel in March 1910, “My Requiem was composed for nothing... for fun, if I may be permitted to say so!”

Fauré’s unusual musical rendering of the Latin text stands out as a unique example in its genre. He emphasizes the idea of serenity, of peace and rest through the use of a restrained and sombre instrumentation, with the organ playing the role of a continuo, the preference given to violas over the violins, and last but not least the importance of his careful selection of texts, excluding the Dies irae altogether, and concluding with the promised Paradise, rather than Purgatory.

As to his preferential treatment of violas and sparing use of violins he raves to Ysaye, “You’ll see, after all those violas, how angelic the violins sound in the Sanctus!!!”

His approach stirred contradictory opinions from his contemporaries. On one side were those who objected to the lack of frightening means for depicting death, as Fauré states in a letter from 1902,
"...people have told me that it did not express the terror of death; someone has called it a berceuse of death. But that is how I feel about death: like a happy deliverance, the hope of happiness beyond the grave rather than a painful experience...Perhaps I have also tried instinctively to escape from convention, since I have been accompanying burial services for such a long time! I am sick of them..."

To those who accepted his work enthusiastically he confesses with a trace of humor,

"...altogether it [the Requiem] is as GENTLE as I am myself!!" (To Eugene Ysaye, August 1900)

The first version of the Requiem, which according to available sources is the only one for which any manuscripts survive, was comprised of Introit et Kyrie, Sanctus, Pie Jesu, Agnus Dei and In Paradisum and was premièred under the composer’s direction on January 16, 1888 for the funeral service of a certain M. Joseph Le Soufache at La Madeleine. "The little Requiem", as Fauré himself named it, which called for a chamber orchestra without violins (except for a solo violin in the Sanctus) or the woodwinds, was performed at La Madeleine until the end of the century.

In June 1889 Fauré wrote to countess Elisabeth Greffulhe, "I have started work again and have added a piece to my Requiem, an Offertoire [consisted only of the baritone solo Hostias], that it lacked." At this time he considered the work complete, though in 1893 he added the choral sections of the Offertoire and the Libera me, written as early as 1877 as an independent piece for baritone solo and organ. The first concert performance took place in May 1894 in Paris, Eugène d’Harcourt directing.

The third and final version of the Requiem, scored for full orchestra apparently at the request of his publisher, Julien Hagejolle, was published in 1900, transforming the Requiem into a concert work. Paul Taffanel led the first performance of the newly orchestrated version at the Trocadéro Palace, in Paris, on July 12, 1900 as part of the World Exhibition.

The following sentence written to René Fauchois in April 1921 best summarizes Fauré’s intentions with his Requiem.

"Everything I managed to entertain in the way of religious illusion I put into my Requiem, which moreover is dominated from beginning to end by a very human feeling of faith in eternal rest."

Program notes by Gabriel Dumitrescu

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Johan Louwersheim, Assistant Conductor

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Sunny Lee
Andrew Yeung
Xiao-po Fei
Kevin He
Kyung Sun Chee
Keh-Shu Shen
Daniel Perry
Matt Mandrones
Louane Bean

CELLO
Zoltan Stefan
Cheryl Bushnell
Gretchen Yatsko
Loren Dempster
Stacy Philpot
Joseph Kim
Lan-June Wang

VIOLIN II
Jeff Yang
Thane Lewis
Kjell Sleipness
Robin Fulton
John Powelson
Christina L. Jenkins

BASS
Olav Hekland
Brad Hartnoll
Claudia Chen
Paul Gabrielson

FLUTE
Megan Lyden
Libby Gray

VIOLA
Halying Li
Greg Savage
Denise Martel
Angela Angheben
Leah Irby
Carrie Jo Adams
Jeanne Drumm

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March 15, Opera Directors’ Workshop. Meany Studio Theater, 8:00 PM.
March 19, David Russell, guest guitar. Brechemin Auditorium, 8:00 PM.
March 30, Brechemin Scholarship Winners Showcase. Meany Theater, 8:00 PM.